

Washington Supreme Court declines to redraw redistricting maps

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By [Laurel Demkovich](#)

OLYMPIA — The Washington Supreme Court on Friday accepted the legislative and congressional maps drawn by the state redistricting commission, declining to take on the role to redraw the maps themselves.

[After a chaotic final meeting that took place mostly behind closed doors](#), the redistricting commission admitted it failed to meet the statutory deadline to redraw maps, having voted on sending the final maps to the Legislature seconds after midnight Nov. 16.

Because the commission did not meet the deadline, the job of redrawing the legislative and congressional district maps that will be in place for the next 10 years went to the Supreme Court.

However, in [an order signed by all nine justices](#) Friday, the court said the commission “substantially complied” with its statutory deadline by voting on the maps just before midnight. The votes taken just after midnight were on the formal resolution and letters to transmit the maps to the Legislature, according to chair Sarah Augustine.

The letter and resolution were then sent to the Senate and the House of Representatives at 12:13 a.m.

“This is not a situation in which the Supreme Court must step in because the Commission has failed to agree on a plan it believes complies with state and federal requirements,” the order reads. The court concludes that the primary purpose of achieving a timely redistricting plan would be impeded, not advanced, by rejecting the Commission’s completed work.”

Although final maps were not drawn at the time of the votes, commissioners said they voted on “a verbal agreement” on what the final maps would look like. Final maps were not done at that point, but the commissioners agreed on “a framework that you could immediately translate into the maps themselves,” Republican appointee Paul Graves told reporters last month.

[Maps were then released](#) to the public late the following evening. The final legislative maps [could make Spokane County more partisan](#), making the 6th and 4th Districts more Republican and the 3rd District more Democrat.

The Court gave authority back to the commission to complete “any remaining tasks necessary” to complete its work. The Legislature must still give final approval of the maps before they can go into effect.

The court did not look at the maps’ compliance with statutory and constitutional requirements, only that they were voted on in time, according to the order. There was some concern among commissioners and lawmakers that the final maps don’t comply with the Voting Rights Act because it does not have a majority Latino district in Yakima.

This story will be updated.